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## Harvesting the Vegetables

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# Harvesting the Vegetables

By Nellie M. Goethe



IN the midst of winter—when the ground lays covered with a blanket of snow and the mercury hovers round and below the zero point—then fresh vegetables are a choice and highly desirable product to be included in the menu. Possibly it is the idea of always wanting what is not,—that makes them so especially desirable in the winter when the season is unfavorable for growing these things. However, the person who has wisely looked ahead and successfully stored the summer and fall crops of fruits and vegetables is fortunate, indeed, for she can inexpensively satisfy her family's tastes with those products—some of which might be priceless on the market just at that time.

The two essential requirements for successful storage are low temperature and an atmosphere that is sufficiently moist that the air will draw the natural moisture from the stored product. Those people who have a small part of the basement partitioned off as a storage room with a dirt floor are fortunate, for a dirt floor maintains and evenly moist atmosphere and tends to equalize the changes of temperature to some extent. If, however you have a basement with an entire cement floor and a heater, you could partition a small place for a storage room. If you do not store more than 15 or 20 bushels and the products are in separate containers, you probably will not need to provide for air ventilation. Provided that you want to store a larger quantity than this—you could put in a window opening or else a 3 in. or 4 in. drain tile.

Shelves may be built in—the lowest being about 2 feet from the floor so that baskets and boxes may be stored underneath it. A large dish of water may be set in the room for moisture, or a still better plan is to set a bushel or two of sphagnum moss or granulated peat moss in the basement and wet this two or three times during the winter.

The best temperature to maintain is about 40 or 50 degrees Fahrenheit. An occasional variation of 5 degrees below or 10 degrees above is not harmful. This applies to all root crops, most fruits, and also flower roots as gladiolus bulbs and dahlias. A dry atmosphere and a temperature of 60 or 70 degrees is best for winter squash and sweet potatoes.

Three root crops should be dug before the hard frost, carrots, beets and turnips. Clean them off a bit but don't cut the tap roots and likewise leave on a third of the tops of beets or these will bleed. Pack these in boxes of clean dry sand and make sure that each is perfectly buried in this and not piled against the others in hit and miss fashion. Sand is often considered heavy and difficult to handle as a filler and sphagnum moss and sawdust—or better yet, granulated peat moss may be substituted for the sand. This filler will admit a sufficient amount of air to prevent decay and retain the normal amount of moisture to keep the vegetables firm and plump.

When the tops of onions begin to wither and turn brown, it is time to pull them up by their roots. It is best to do this when the ground is dry and there will not be excessive damp earth clinging to them. They may be put in bunches of about a dozen and tied together by the tops. If you live on a farm these bunches may be hung up on a wire in some suitable, well ventilated building, such as the wood shed, and allowed to remain there to dry until the cold weather comes. Or instead of putting them in bunches they may be allowed to lay on the ground along their row a day or two to dry. This will not take long in good weather. Turn them over and keep them well spread apart and as soon as the surface is dry take them under cover (but not indoors) and let them dry further. The sun injures onions—especially the white skinned varieties. Cut the tops off about half an inch away from the bulb and sort out all those that are not entirely firm for immediate use.

The best storage container for onions is the crate, slatted on the bottom as well as sides and ends, for this allows nearly perfect ventilation. Another advantage of the crate is that one box may stand above another—thus taking up little floor space. A dry, airy storage room with a temperature never below about 35 degrees Fahrenheit is an ideal storage place for them. This same last storage procedure may be employed for those onions that have been dried in bunches.

When potatoes are ready for digging, the tops of the stalks die and turn brown. Dig them and then dry the potatoes in the shade away from strong light as this makes them bitter. They should be stored

in a dry, airy and preferably dark place—keeping them spread out either in crates or on the cellar floor. It is a decided advantage to have them spread out for if a rot spot starts on one, it is not so likely to affect the neighboring potatoes. It is a good idea to sort them often enough to prevent any trouble of this type.

Just before the frost approaches pick all the tomatoes on the vines—the green, half-ripe, and ripe tomatoes. Some may be put onto a bed of straw on the ground and then covered over well with more straw, and others may be wrapped in paper and put away in the coolest place that will not freeze. They may also be stored in dry peat moss in a basket or box. Use the outdoor ones first and then the indoor ones, and it is possible that you may be fortunate enough to have fresh tomatoes for both your Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

Eggplant, cucumbers, and melons can't be stored for a very long period of time. When cold weather comes, you may pick them and put them on a bed of straw in your dirt floor storage room. They will very likely keep another month.

The winter supply of cabbages and cauliflower are well stored if hung up by the roots in a cold place. Cauliflower will not keep so long and it must be taken in before the frost. It doesn't harm cabbage to freeze, but it readily spoils when it thaws out—although they keep excellently when kept frozen.

An extra supply of root crops and cabbages for spring use may be stored in a pit where they can be taken out when the frost is out of the ground. The storage pit should be about three feet in depth in a well drained spot and of a sufficient size for your own use. If the soil is heavy there should be three inches of gravel or coarse sand on the floor. Line the sides with hay, straw, or leaves as the vegetables are put in to keep them clean and dry. For a flue, a piece of stove pipe may be used or else several 4 in. boards nailed together with a number of holes augured in a few inches apart at the lower ends. The top should extend about 3 or 4 feet above the ground level. Fill the pit within a foot or six inches of the top—rounding it up in the center. A layer of hay and straw

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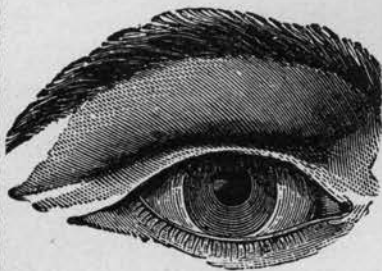
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## Harvesting the Vegetables

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should be put on and also a layer of dirt. This will be all right until the extreme cold weather comes and then another layer of straw or dirt should be added and the ventilating outlet stuffed with an old bag.

An interesting bit of information is given by Grace Tabor, editor of the Garden Department of the Woman's Home Companion, concerning the harvesting of salsify and parsnips. "The two outstanding vegetables requiring to be frozen solid and thawed out again before coming into their full perfection of taste are salsify and parsnips. And no one can wonder at the folks who don't like the latter, if they have eaten them only as the market offers them—that is, dug from the ground in the fall along with the other root crops and stored indoors until used. I can't think of anything worse to eat," she concludes.

If your entire supply of salsify and parsnips are left in the garden over winter they will be unavailable until the frost thaws out in the spring. So replant part of your supply in boxes and whenever you wish to use them bring a box into the basement and let it thaw out.

Celery for winter use should be transplanted into sandy earth in boxes which are as deep as the celery is tall. The sand need be only about three inches thick on the bottom of the box, and the plants may be set as close together as they will go. Put the box in a dry, cold dark place—out of danger from a frost—and in six or seven weeks the celery will be ready for use.

If vegetables are carefully and properly stored, they will be in excellent condition for the winter's use. The housewife who has the extra supply of stored vegetables—will in reality—find herself "queen of the fresh vegetable world" in the midst of winter—with a variety of products to choose from for her daily menus.

## At the Iowa State Fair

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good for children of various ages. Blocks which allow the child to construct buildings, books which have bright pictures, washtubs and boards and irons and ironing boards, as well as little pans, were shown. A ship made by one of the boys in the nursery school was on exhibit.

This world we're livin' in,

Is mighty hard to beat.

You get a thorn with every rose,

But aren't the roses sweet?

—Frank L. Stanton.

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